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DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, AND S/CRS
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY
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SUBJECT: CFC Week of March 5 -- Fireworks Follow the Killing of Two
AMIS Soldiers

11. (SBU) Summary: The killing of two Nigerian soldiers by Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Minawi soldiers in Graidia dominated the Cease-fire Commission (CFC) this week, with tensions rising between the faction and the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in both the CFC and in the sectors. The CFC investigation report states that the attack was perpetrated by SLA/Minawi, although it includes a statement by the sector representatives that they are being falsely accused. The Force Commander called his sector heads to El Fasher after the attack to tell them that they are not to patrol in sectors where factions cannot assure their safety. There are rising accusations that AMIS has lost its neutrality. The events again highlight the need for material and advisory support for the SLA/Minawi. The one piece of good news on that front was that the first tranche of non-military humanitarian aid was delivered to the signatory factions on March 12. End Summary.

12. (SBU) The CFC meeting on March 7 was the first since the killing of two AMIS soldiers in Graidia on March 5 during a carjacking. SLA/Minawi representative Adam Ali War began the meeting by protesting that the proposed agenda referencing "friction with SLA/Minawi faction" was too strong and "at sectors" too general and asked that these phrases be removed. CFC Chairman Aprezi became enraged in response to War's protest. He told Ali War that he was free to walk out, but the CFC would discuss the issue of the conduct of SLA/Minawi forces in the sectors in the wake of the killing of two Nigerian soldiers. Ali War held his ground, stating that he would not leave but that he believed the phrasing was unfair and he could not allow the meeting to continue. This discussion, with certain variations, lasted over two hours, with all factions and observers pitching in at times to reinforce the Chairman. The U.S. representative opined that he thought the word "friction" was far too diplomatic and should be strengthened. UN and EU observers continually pressed SLA/Minawi to take responsibility. Only the Sudanese government was silent.

KEY THEMES

13. (SBU) During the discussion and in the days following several themes emerged:

-- Threat to Close Down Ops in Insecure Areas: The FC told the factions that if they could not give his soldiers absolute affirmation that they can control the area where they operate, the AU soldiers would not leave the wire, stating "nobody kills my soldiers and goes free, I will close down Minni areas...If we do not have the cooperation in areas, I will close them down, no patrols, no escorts." Aprezi brought all his sector commanders in for a conference on March 8 when he reiterated that force protection is

his number one concern. On March 12, there were only eight confidence building patrols, down from the normal 20 to 25. (Note: The FC is not alone in his caution. The EU representative and UN representative both told S/CRS Poloff that EU security regulations prohibit EU employees from going to any areas controlled by SLA/Minawi. End note.)

-- A Knife's Edge of Stability: The most chilling exchange occurred when the FC told SLA/Minawi that AMIS was preparing to return to the field and confront the SLA/Minawi faction in Graida when he ordered them to stand down. Ali War was taken aback and accused the FC of picking a fight with his faction. The exchange eventually wore Ali War down, and he said he was sorry for what happened and would cooperate in the future to stop such incidents. UNMIS Light Support Package Commander Von Staden told S/CRS Poloff that many areas existed where tensions were high between AMIS and the SLA/Minawi faction. One international observer heard a rumor that in Sector Two the Nigerian contingent might be planning an operation to avenge the killings.

-- AMIS Loss of Neutrality: In a meeting with A/S Lowenkron on March 10, an SLA/Minawi political leader said that his faction believes AMIS is no longer a neutral force. CFC EU Vice Chairman said that over the past several days each of the CFC faction representatives have told him that they no longer see AMIS as a neutral party.

-- SLA/Minawi Loss of Control in the Field: On 5 March, just prior to the big incident, SLA/Minawi commander stopped an AMIS fuel convoy near Graida to demand fuel. An SLA/Minawi CFC representative on the convoy sided with his colleagues and asked that the convoy fuel the SLA/Minawi vehicles. The next day in Um Barru SLA/Minawi soldiers threatened to stop AMIS vehicles leaving the MGS gate after they were not allowed to place one of their vehicles with armed men in an AMIS convoy. The same day, SLA/Minawi soldiers beat up an

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AMIS water truck driver.

-- Support to SLA(MM) Faction: The Sudanese Government distributed the first round of non-military logistical support stipulated in the DPA on March 12. The faction believes it is far too little. SLA/Minawi in North Darfur received 1,000 bags of sorghum, 150 bags of lentils, 100 bags of sugar, 150 cans of oil, 50 bags of salt. The other factions received a lesser amount proportional to their numbers.

FOLLOW UP WITH SLA/Minawi FACTION

14. (SBU) S/CRS Poloff met with War and SLA/Minawi commander Ahmed Gardiya Khamis at the Peace Secretariat on March 8. They were subdued, sought guidance, and promised to work within the CFC to improve the situation. Ali War reiterated that the movement is often blamed before investigations are completed. He said there are bandits and breakaway factions and challenged the assertion that the SLA/Minawi movement is losing control in the field. He said they have been expecting humanitarian assistance through AMIS per the DPA, and suggested that the Sudanese government strategy was to starve the movement.

15. (SBU) S/CRS Poloff agreed that there were serious problems with DPA implementation. He suggested that SLA/Minawi should take the following actions to improve its public image and its effectiveness:

-- Conduct independent investigations: when an attack occurs in an area that is understood to be under SLA/Minawi control, they should conduct their own investigation and share their findings.

-- Issue Statements: SLA/Minawi should be more proactive in putting its message out, e.g. a message of condolence and condemnation when AMIS soldiers are killed. (Note: Minawi issued a statement on March 13 condemning the attack in Graida, reaffirming its commitment to the CFC, and calling for a complete investigation of the incident.

End note.)

-- Field Commander's Coordination: It would help to maintain control over the force if there were periodic meetings with all field commanders. AMIS could help with transportation, and Minni and others in the SLA leadership could use the gathering to stress issues of command and control. AMIS and the international community could be invited as observers and to underscore specific messages, e.g. facilitation of humanitarian access.

-- Delineation of Areas: The SLM should define its areas of control and disseminate this information.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The recent humanitarian assistance to the signatory factions is welcome. However, sustained pressure on the Sudanese Government is necessary to ensure this is not a one-time event. SLA/Minawi needs more non-military logistical support, advisors, and training to start the transition from an insurgent force.

POWERS